

tinside hthe scoop

Risk management:

Sharon Reeves, 47 FTW safety office, gives examples of risk management and how it can decrease the chances of mishaps ...

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47 CS award:

The 47th Communications Squadron recently received an Air Force-level award for effective maintenance...

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Heritage Hall induction ceremony:

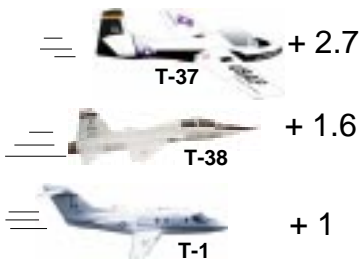
Chaplain (Col.) Charles Baldwin, AETC command chaplain, is scheduled to be inducted into the 85 FTS Heritage Hall today in a 3:30 p.m. ceremony. The colonel joins eight others in being honored with an induction to the Hall...

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Mission status

(As of May 24)

Days ahead(+) or behind(-)



Fiscal Year 2000 statistics

--Sorties flown: 42,658
--Hours flown: 63,298.6
--Pilot wings earned in FY 00: 209
--Wings earned since 1963: 11,574

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Photo by Airman 1st Class Brad Pettit

Staff Sgt. Keith Baber, base honor guard, stands at attention during a ceremony at Ribas-Dominicci Circle on base. The circle is named after Maj. Fernando Ribas-Dominicci, a Laughlin graduate of Class 77-05, who lost his life in the line of duty over Libya in 1986.

On Monday, we will all have an opportunity to enjoy a day away from work. Many will barbecue, others will take their boat out on Lake Amistad and yet others will use the day to catch up on chores. While these activities are a nice break from our everyday routine, Memorial Day is intended for a much larger reason. Memorial Day is a time to give thought to the many men and women who have given their lives in the name of freedom – making the ultimate sacrifice. It's a time to reflect on the many freedoms we enjoy as Americans and to remember who fought for those freedoms.

President Clinton has declared 3 p.m. as a national time for America to pause and take a moment to reflect on why we have Memorial Day. I encourage you to take a minute at 3 p.m. and stop with the rest of America to think of our valiant heroes. Let us not forget the true meaning of Memorial Day.

Winfield W. Scott III

Col. Winfield W. Scott III
47th Flying Training Wing commander

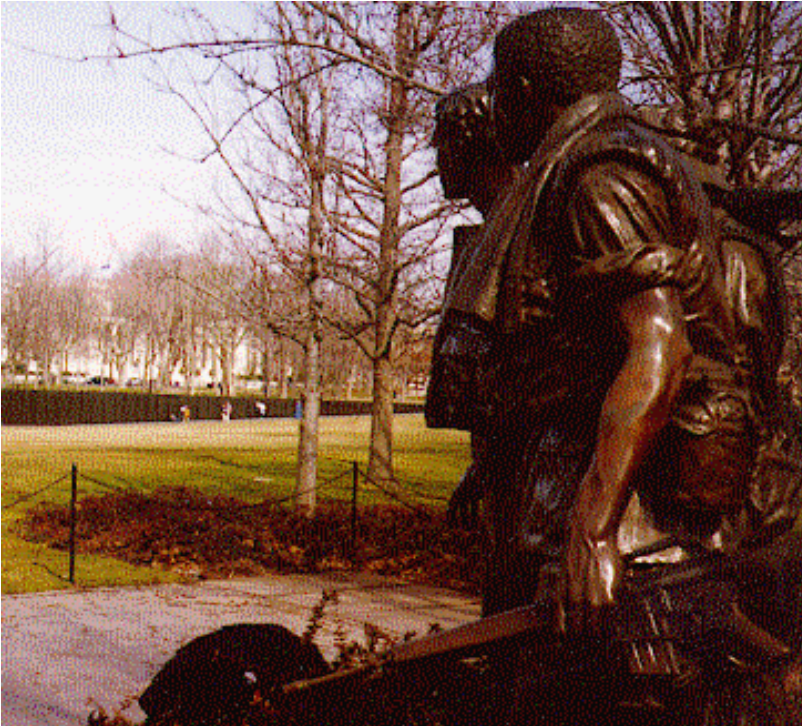


Photo by Senior Airman Mike Hammond

Statues representing those who fought in Vietnam overlook the Vietnam Memorial wall in Washington, D.C.



Courtesy photo

The American flag flies over the graves of fallen veterans at Arlington National Cemetery.



A View from the Top



By Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton
AETC commander

On Nov. 7, 2000, our nation will hold a general election to choose our next President, Vice President, all the members of the House of Representatives and some members of the Senate.

Too far off to think about, you say? Not really if you want to participate. Or, you might think that it's too hard to vote because you're stationed overseas or not in the state of your legal residence. Wrong. And finally, you may think one vote doesn't really matter. Wrong again.

Let's take on these misconceptions.

First, it's not too early to register to vote by absentee ballot. Don't put it off. Do it today. Your unit has a Voting Assistance Officer who can provide a broad range of non-partisan information to help you and your eligible family members register to vote, as well as informing you about your home state's specific requirements to vote in state and local elections. This procedure works and is easy to do, so use it!

Absentee voting allows you to "voice your choice" no matter how far your duties take you from home. Each vote counts equally as our individual choice on who should represent us in our government, and how we

In an election where one vote can make the difference, absentee ballots are available to allow you to ...

Voice your choice

believe our government should work.

Does a single vote really matter? Absolutely! The only votes that count are those you can count. We should all act as if the whole election depends on our individual votes.

Although we are the oldest major democracy in the world, it's unfortunate that we have proportionately fewer people participate in our elections than in the rest of the self-governing world.

Some non-voters say they were too busy at work to get to the polls. Others report they failed to vote because of apathy about the political process. Pretty weak excuses, I think.

As military members, DoD employees, and Air Force families, I believe we have a special commitment to exercise our right to vote. Voting is a fundamental right for those who live in and support a democracy. Many men and women, especially those in the U.S. Armed Forces, have fought and died to preserve this right.

As I see it, we in the Air Force have committed ourselves in service of our nation and it's our responsibility to help shape its future. So get registered and go vote!

(Courtesy AETC News Service)

Risk management tips for 101 Critical Days

By Sharon Reeves

47 FTW safety office

If you've been around the Air Force for a few years, you are probably familiar with the period of time called the 101 Critical Days of Summer – that time of year between Memorial Day and Labor Day. This has traditionally been a time when more Air Force members died in off-duty mishaps than at any other time of the year. For the last three years, that trend has been going down. Our goal to have zero fatalities – and with increased emphasis on risk management for all our activities, we can do it!

What is risk management? Some examples:

-- You see a vehicle mishap and suddenly become aware of your own driving – and how perhaps you should drive a little more slowly and pay more attention to the road and other cars around you.

That's risk management.

-- Your leave papers have been signed and you're really anxious to hit the road. But because you've had a rough day trying to finish all pending projects, you know that a good night's sleep will make you more alert and ready to travel. *That decision is risk management.*

Here are a few more examples of identifying and managing risks:

-- You've been invited to go boating with some friends at the lake. But you see some people putting a case of beer in the cooler on the boat. Then you ask the "skipper" if there are life vests for everyone, and he just laughs and says to you, "Life vests? Yeah, there are a few in the locker under the seat." You think about the risks, and decide to spend the day on the shore.

-- You've invited friends over for a backyard cookout. You advised them that you'll have beer and cocktails, so they can plan ahead to have a designated driver if they plan to drink. When the guests arrive, you serve food with the drinks, and you ensure that no one drives home after drinking.

In the safety business, our desire is to save lives and prevent injuries. Our success is measured by your integrity and risk management decisions. Risk management is simply using common sense and applying the safety information you've heard many times before.

Let's have fun this summer, and do our part to reach the goal of zero fatalities during these 101 Critical Days.

Freedom of the press, speech, doesn't warrant indiscretion

By Master Sgt. Tom Hankus

Public affairs

The First Amendment to the Constitution declares that, "Congress shall make no law ... abridging freedom of speech, or of the press." The framers of the First Amendment recognized that freedom of the press and speech is a vital part of the political system based on the will of the people.

But unbridled freedom of expression can be a hurtful thing – to you and to others – particularly if your facts aren't completely correct ... and sometimes even when they are.

The 47th Flying Training Wing public affairs office staff routinely deals with the press and stands ready to assist you with all of

Imprudent exercise of freedom of speech with the media concerning military activities, for example, could open a host of Pandora's boxes that you never imagined possible.

your dealings with the media. The last thing we want to see is your freedom of expression turn into a personal liability.

An unnamed patriot of the period aptly put it when he said, "It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech,

freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either of them (when the situation is unwarranted)."

Imprudent exercise of freedom of speech with the media concerning military activities, for example, could open a host of Pandora's boxes that you never imagined possible.

Let's just say a local member of the press (a friend of yours) hears a rumor that flight operations at your base have been steadily declining. This friend happens to know that you work in base operations and asks you some very specific questions. You tell the reporter everything you know about this situation. You might feel like a

See 'Press,' page 11

Looking to the ORI

(By Lt. Col. Barbara Stewart, 47 FTW inspector general)

90-day checklist

- Identify problem areas with self-inspection checklists and develop corrective actions.
- Ensure findings from the 1998 ORI are still closed.
- Use crossfeed ORI reports to identify and correct problems here and to find practices that may work well.
- Clean out storage areas and properly dispose of unusable or unneeded items.



Actionline

Call 298-5351

This column is one way to work through problems that haven't been solved through normal channels. By leaving your name and phone number, you are assured of a timely personal reply. It's also very useful in case more information is needed in order to pursue your inquiry. If you give your name, we will make every attempt to ensure confidentiality when appropriate.

If your question relates to the general interest of the people of Laughlin, the question and answer may also

be printed in the *Border Eagle*. Before you call the Actionline, please try to work the problem out through the normal chain of command or directly with the base agency involved.

Thanks for your cooperation and I look forward to reading some quality ideas and suggestions.



Winfield W. Scott III
Col. Winfield W. Scott III
47th Flying Training Wing commander

Commander or ner

By Maj. Steven Donatucci
47th Communications Squadron
commander

You have to love the song by Lee Greenwood called "God Bless the USA." It's a tradition and highlight at every pilot graduation – mixed with the video, it generates deep emotion and pride. To me, the song is extremely inspiring and rings loudly the message of how fortunate we are – "I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free...and I won't forget the men who died and gave that right to me...and I proudly stand up next to you to defend her still today, because there ain't no doubt I love this land, God bless the USA!"

The song reminds me of why I'm an Air Force member, refocuses me on the main purpose of my job, stirs memories of my father's past as a 21-year Army aviator, and reminds me of a great friend here at Laughlin – Bobby Barrera!

Bobby Barrera works in the 47th Mission Support Squadron Family Support Center, and I am extremely fortunate to have known him over my last 23 months! Just like Lee Greenwood's song, Bobby refocuses and inspires me – by knowing his history, watching him work, and enjoying his company. You see, Bobby was a Marine – and in 1969 his life changed forever. During a special mission about 30 miles outside of Da Nang, Vietnam, his armored personnel

The life and story of a local man's courage makes 47 CS commander Proud to be an American

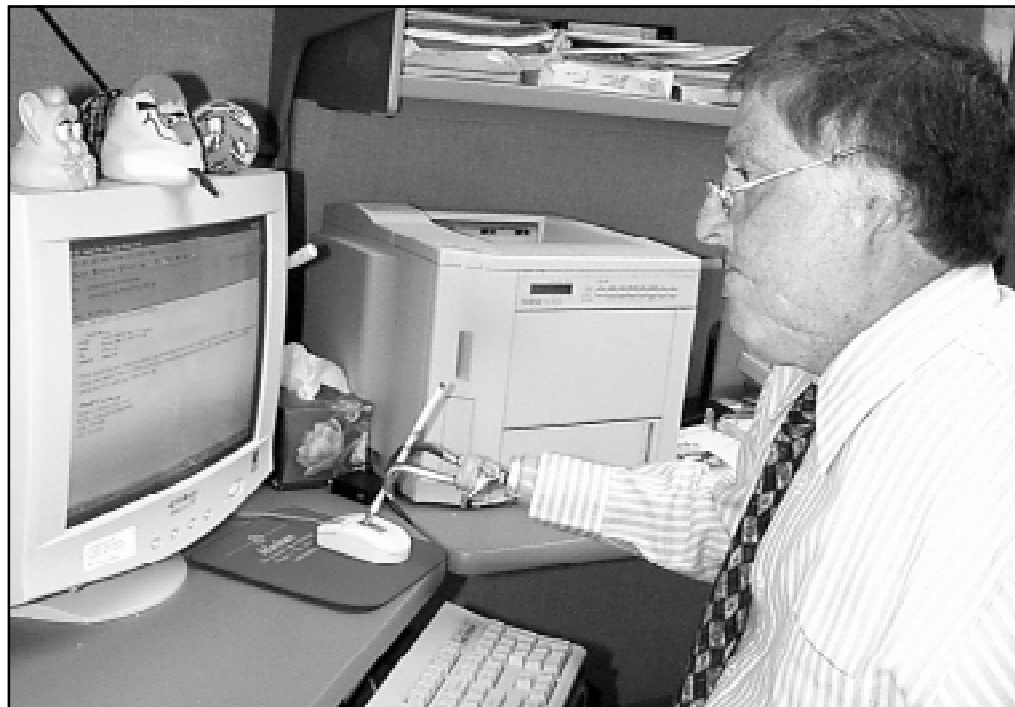


Photo by Airman 1st Class Brad Pettit

Barrera moves the mouse on his computer while at work as director of the Laughlin Family Support Center.

carrier was hit by enemy fire. Bobby lost his left arm, lost his right hand, and was burned across 40 percent of his body. You'd think that would prevent a normal person from moving on and actively taking full advantage of the gift of life. Not Bobby – he's extraordinary!

Bobby is a true inspiration and example that we can do anything. He's a top professional who I've looked up to since the day I met him. Despite his physical challenges, he's been able to take advantage of his rare talents and is always giving to others – he's extremely

charismatic, motivational, intelligent, determined, capable and an all-around outstanding person who's simply the best at what he does. It's not a surprise to me that he elected to continue to serve his country, and other people, in a position that touches every new Laughlin member – leading the Family Support Center.

The neat thing about Bobby is when you first meet him you notice the physical impacts from 1969 – but as you get to know him, you quickly forget they exist. That's just how Bobby is – a very successful person, who, through his actions,

determination, and unstoppable success, blinds us from his injuries and reminds all of us that anything is possible. I suggest we all use Bobby as an inspirational reminder throughout our lives.

To all of you – never say, or believe, you can't do something! As Bobby has demonstrated throughout his special life, you can do anything you set your mind and heart to. I always try to share these types of positive thoughts with new troops.

As I get the opportunity to meet just-arrived 47th Communications Squadron members, I tell each of them that "the sky is the limit – you can and will excel. The only limiting factor is within the mind for those who doubt!" Bobby Barrera is a living example of that positive, exciting attitude.

Bobby – you've successfully overcome unbelievable challenges in your life and you continue to consistently excel at everything you do – you're an inspiration that helps refocus all of us! The 1997 Department of Defense Disabled Employee of the Year Award, and 1998 Disabled American Veteran of the Year Award you rightfully earned are only small tokens that reveal how proud we are of you. You make us all "Proud to be an American" and "God [did] bless the USA" by placing you on our team.

With all the pride and enthusiasm which drives our mission to graduate the world's best air warriors...Team XL proudly salutes you, Bobby Barrera!

One income living possible with effort, change in thinking

By Tech. Sgt. Amy Urban

Personal Financial Management Program manager

Do you really need two incomes? Many families labor under the assumption they need two incomes to survive. Most of us have been there. We dash off to work the instant the kids are on the school bus and put the baby into daycare. A child's sore throat or a day of

school canceled due to snow throws the whole system into an uproar. Difficult, to say the least, to keep everyone (the kids, boss, spouse, yourself, etc.) happy. Then there's the homework, housework, your marriage, grocery shopping... Whew!

Have you ever considered that you might do just fine, or even better, on *one* income? Let's profile the

incomes of an imaginary Air Force family. The active duty member makes \$25,000 per year. The spouse works full time in retail sales and makes \$18,000 per year. They have two children. While the spouse would rather stay at home with the children, the parents feel they could not afford the drop in income.

See 'Money,' page 10

Col. Winfield W. Scott III

Commander

1st Lt. Angela O'Connell

Public affairs officer

Senior Airman Mike Hammond

Editor

Airman 1st Class Brad Pettit

Staff writer

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"Excellence – not our goal, but our standard."

– 47 FTW motto

or patronage without regard to race, color or religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user or patron. Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Public Affairs Office of the 47th Flying Training Wing.

Deadlines, Advertising

News for the Border Eagle should be submitted to the 47th Flying Training Wing Public Affairs Office, Bldg. 338, Laughlin AFB, TX, Ext. 5262. **Copy deadline is close of business each Thursday the week prior to publication.** Advertising should be submitted to the Del Rio News-Herald, 2205 Bedell, Del Rio, TX, 774-4611. Advertising should be submitted by 4 p.m. each Friday. Submissions can be E-mailed to: michael.hammond@laughlin.af.mil or reginal.woodruff@laughlin.af.mil

The *XLer*

Hometown: Beeville, Texas.
Family: Husband, Carey; two cats, Clover and Babette.
Time at Laughlin: 3 years in June.
Time in service: 3 years, 5 months.
Why did you join the Air Force family? To serve my country ,To serve my country, patriotism and education.
Name one way to improve life at Laughlin: More sports and squadron interaction events.
Long-term goals: To earn my Master's in social work and get commissioned.
Great-est accomplishment: Airman of the Year 1998 and 1999 for the 47th Medical Group.
Hobbies: Sports, fishing, cooking and studying.
Bad habit: Smoking.



Senior Airman Patricia Fulce
47th Medical Group

If you could spend one hour with any person in history, who would it be and why? My Grandfather . He taught me so much about honor and pride. He was a strong man.

Where are they now?

Name: Maj. John P. Montgomery.
Class/date of graduation from Laughlin: July 2, 1987; Class 87-06.
Aircraft you now fly and base you are stationed at: F-16, Hill Air Force Base.
Mission of your current aircraft? Precision strike.
What do you like most about



your current aircraft? It is an F-16. Everything is cool. I like all the different missions.
What do you dislike most about your current aircraft? Nothing.

What was the most important thing you learned from your time at Laughlin, besides learning how to fly? The guy that finishes last may end up doing great things later on.

What is your most memorable experience from Laughlin? The skit we put on as the new class at the senior

class's graduation.
What advice would you give SUPT students at Laughlin? Flying a fighter is not for the guy who plans on doing a quick touch and go in the Air Force.

47th Communications Squadron wins 1999 Air Force-level award

By Airman 1st Class Brad Pettit

Staff writer

The 47th Communications Squadron won the 1999 Air Force Communications-Electronics Maintenance Effectiveness Award in the Medium Unit Category.

The squadron received the award for its effective maintenance of base systems, mission support, and procedures for bringing new systems to Laughlin. The squadron was graded on several criteria, including how it impacts the base mission and saves the Air Force money. During fiscal year 1999, the 47 CS squadron saved the Air Force more than \$27 million dollars while increasing vital communications system operational rates to an average of 99.5 percent for base computer networks, airfield systems and telephone systems.

For example, the squadron effectively led an effort to rebuild the base VORTAC system and improved system reliability by 80 percent. This system is critical to all fliers since it "paints" a picture in the sky for pilots to get to, operate within, and return from different airspace operating areas. This effort doubled system radial accuracy and extended facility life for at least another 15 years.

"Among many other feats, we went in and completely revamped the entire computer local area network system on base," said Chief Master Sgt. Stephen Enyeart, 47th Communications chief of maintenance. "We now have enough available capacity to facilitate anything the Air Force throws at us. With the increase in modifications that have been made to the system, we have gone from using 80 percent of the available system capacity to only two percent of its capacity on our busiest day," the chief continued. "We've got some extremely talented people in this squadron - some of the most talented I've worked with in my entire 25-year career."

The communications troops also made huge steps towards the future. They captured \$20-\$25M in savings by developing improved plans to bed down the Training Integration Management System here at Laughlin and 5



A team from Kelly Air Force Base replaces antennas at the RAPCON

other bases. TIMS is the future computer network, which will be used to automate all student pilot training activity and classroom instruction. They also worked with the 47th Civil Engineering and Operations Support Squadron to build vital integration plans to bed down \$8M in new communications systems in to the new \$8M Base Operations Complex. This will be the future hub of all air traffic control, base operations, and weather for our entire flying mission.

"Let me share with you my favorite motto - Gooooooo Comm!," said Maj Steve Donatucci, 47th Communications Squadron commander. "We are extremely blessed to have very talented comm troops at this base - the very best I've ever seen in my 14.5 years in the Air Force! But, we have much more than a comm unit at this base. You can't provide good communications maintenance without outstanding leadership at the group and wing levels, understanding customers, and the full cooperation from all those on base," said Maj. Steve Donatucci, 47th Communications squadron commander. "We continue to have fantastic leadership and all across the base we have super customers willing to work with us, which is a huge advantage."

The squadron won the award in the medium unit category, which holds the most competition due to the amount of medium communications units in the Air Force. In addition, this is the first time a communications squadron in the Air Education and Training Command has won the award.

"Over the last 6 years, within the small, medium, and large unit categories, 16 out of 18 times this top award was won by squadrons overseas. Winning the award at a CONUS pilot training base says a lot for the importance of our mission and how vital it has become to the success of the entire Air Force mission," said Donatucci. "You can't win this level of award unless you are supporting a critical mission like training the world's best air warriors - hooooaaah!



Airman 1st Class Toby Pete aligns a Glideslope

New construction

House approves nearly \$12 million for new visitors quarters here

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Representative Henry Bonilla, R-Texas, announced May 16 that the House of Representatives has approved \$11.973 million for new visitors quarters at Laughlin.

The final vote on House Resolution 4425 was 386 - 22.

"The construction of new visitors quarters will make it easier for the men and women at Laughlin to see the people they care about, and will also provide a good first impression for anyone visiting the base," said Bonilla.

The administration had not requested the money for the new visitors quarters. Bonilla worked with his colleagues on the Military Construction Appropriations Subcommittee to have the money for the visitors quarters approved. Replacing this facility is long overdue. The current visitors quarters are nearly 50 years old, and have antiquated utility systems that have well surpassed their life expectancy.

The House approved a total of \$8.63 billion in military construction, the figure that had been approved by the Appropriations Committee May 9. About 40 percent of the money is going towards housing for military families. An additional \$943 million is being spent on other projects to improve the quality of life for military personnel, including construction and renovation of child development centers, hospital and medical facilities and barracks.

"We at Team XL look forward to having the opportunity to provide better housing for our people," said Col. Skip Scott, 47th Flying Training Wing commander. "This will be a definite improvement in quality of life - and it is in line with recent initiatives for better housing."

"We are having problems recruiting men and women to serve in all branches of our military," Bonilla said. "Those who do join must all too often face low pay, poor housing, and frequent deployments. The construction we have approved today will improve the lives of thousands of soldiers, and therefore strengthen our military."

The bill must now be approved by the Senate, and be signed by the president.

Fraud, Waste and Abuse

Preventing Fraud, Waste and Abuse is everyone's job! If you know or suspect FWA, call the FWA hotline, 298-4170.

AETC Command Chaplain returns to roots at Laughlin, receives induction into Heritage Hall in ceremony today

By Master Sgt.
Tom Hankus

Public affairs

Air Education and Training Command Chaplain Col. Charles C. Baldwin will be inducted into the 85th Flying Training Squadron Heritage Hall during a 3:30 p.m. ceremony at the Operations Training Complex here.

The colonel is the first

chaplain/pilot to receive this honor and joins eight other distinguished Laughlin pilot training alumni and instructor pilots in achieving this recognition. The last person to be inducted into the Heritage Hall was Maj. Gen. (retired) Gerald L. Prather, who completed 32 years of service to his country, including over 500 combat missions in Vietnam.

The Heritage Hall honors individuals who have been assigned here, and who have achieved notable service to the Air Force and their country.

In recognition of this prestigious honor, Lt. Col. Michael Silver, 85th Flying Training Squadron commander, said, "Col. Baldwin's distinguished career as a chaplain and pilot began right here at Laughlin. It's exciting to welcome back one of our own, and we're proud to induct him into Heritage Hall."

Baldwin began his career at the Air Force Academy, graduating in 1969. While a cadet, he discovered his religious calling. But while it was clear to him that

he would eventually become a chaplain, he realized the Air Force had a pressing need for his service as a pilot in Vietnam. While assigned in Thailand, Baldwin volunteered for helicopter training. Seven months later, he found himself flying rescue missions at Da Nang Air Base, Vietnam. In 1972, then-captain Baldwin earned his first Distinguished Flying Cross for the heroic, successful rescue of an aircrewman from certain death or capture by hostile forces.

Following Vietnam, the colonel finished his flying career. In 1974, he left the Air Force to pursue his goal to become a chaplain. He spent five years as a Southern Baptist minister, then re-entered the Air Force in 1979 as a Protes-

tant chaplain at Lackland AFB, Texas. Since then, he has been command chaplain twice and has served a tour as Commandant of the Air Force Chaplain Service. In Desert Storm, Col. Baldwin distinguished himself as the senior installation staff chaplain. He directed the largest chapel program in theater and provided crisis counseling in the chaos of war. He was awarded the Bronze Star.

Today, Baldwin ensures quality chapel programs throughout Air Education and Training Command to meet the needs of military members and their families.

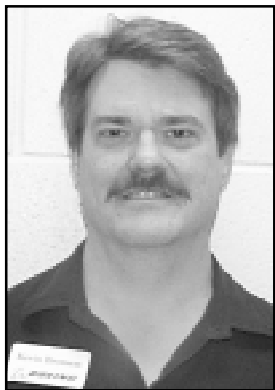
The Heritage Hall is located in the main entrance hallway of the Laughlin Operations Training Complex (building 320).



Courtesy photo

Chaplain (Col.) Charles Baldwin enjoys a light moment in the cockpit of an EC-121. Baldwin is the first chaplain/pilot to be inducted into the Laughlin Heritage Hall.

Boeing presents longevity of service awards



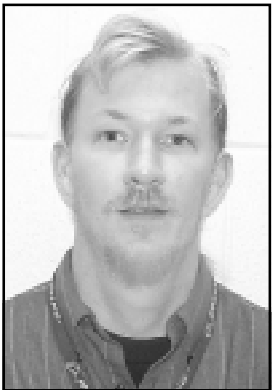
Kevin Bronson
15 years



Jesse Hernandez
10 years



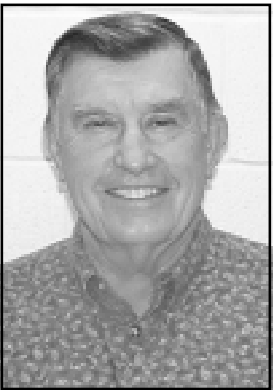
Charles Hamner
10 years



Mark Crawford
10 years



Ralph Ewers
10 years



Danny Roberson
10 years



Susan Tackett
10 years



Larry Neal
5 years



Ron Burgi
5 years



Robert Avila
5 years

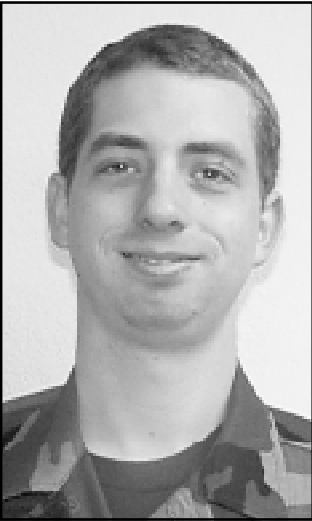
Question of the week

Who do you remember most on Memorial Day?



“All of those military members who died in the line of duty while serving our country.”

Staff Sgt. Michael Schaefer
47th Security Forces Squadron



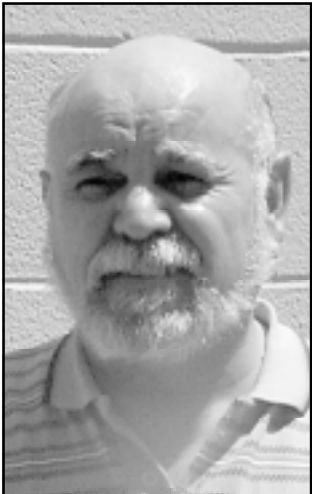
“The past and present members of the armed forces for the sacrifices they have made for freedom.”

Senior Airman Mark Steele
47th Communications Squadron



“My father. He is the person I look up most to. I try to follow in my father’s footsteps in everything I do.”

2nd Lt. Michael Zwolve
86th Flying Training Squadron



“I remember Pearl Harbor on Memorial Day. I think about all the lives that were lost and about the heroic deeds that occurred there.”

Master Sgt. (Ret.) Gregory Garza
Del Rio

www.af.mil/newspaper

‘Money,’ from page 3

Let’s take a look.
Together, the couple earns \$43,000. If they drop to the active duty member’s income (\$25,000) they’ll save \$2,700 on their federal income taxes alone. They’ll save another \$729 on their state income taxes. Spouse will not have to pay the \$1,420 in social security and Medicare tax if unemployed. The children now stay happily at home with their dad instead of going to daycare eight hours each day. The couple saves an amazing \$7,350 over the course of one year without daycare costs. **

The spouse eats lunch at home now, instead of going out for lunch hour – saving about \$3 each day and realizing an annual savings of \$735. Without the daily trip to work, the spouse spends about \$5 less on gas each week (a net savings of \$250 for the year). Total savings (drum roll please) – \$13,184! Deducting the savings from the \$18,000 currently earned, the spouse’s actual income is really

Are you working for \$2.50 an hour? Run your own numbers and see.

only \$4,816 – or about \$2.50 per hour. Are you working for \$2.50 an hour? Run your own numbers and see.

I’m not suggesting that everyone will save money by dropping to one income. An alternative would be finding other ways to reduce expenses. This is purely to show you how one-income living is possible, if that is what you really want.

For more information, call me at the Family Support Center, 298-5109.

** (Daycare numbers were calculated at \$150 per week for two preschool children for 49 weeks – allowing three weeks for vacations. However, some daycare centers require payment to hold your slot during your vacations).

Border Eagle submissions deadline is Thursday, one week prior to publication

‘Press,’ from page 2
real big shot for the moment ... but operational readiness pays the price for your indiscretion.

Or perhaps you’re a military spouse and a member of a private organization conducting a business function downtown. You’re approached by a member of the media wanting to know your opinion on Reserve components assisting with pilot training at your base. You have very little knowledge of the facts, but you have a lot of opinions. In the next day’s newspaper, you find yourself a spokesperson for the base – commenting on a subject about which you know very little.

Or maybe you are a member of a group that has been unjustly mistreated for years, and you don’t think the base does enough to publicize the activities of your group. So you call the local newspaper downtown and let ‘em have it good ... while unbeknownst to you the base is plan-

ning a major publicity campaign to tell your story. You may be a star in the morning edition of the local civilian newspaper, but the publicity effort planned at your local base fizzles and dies on the vine before it is ever launched!

In these situations, the ramifications are many. Remember – even if you are a military spouse, you’re a part of the Air Force family. The wing commander and public affairs staff would prefer to be given a heads-up before you talk to the media.

Going through public affairs may appear to be a roadblock at times – but if it keeps you out of trouble, it is worth the investment in effort. As Mark Twain once put it, “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is really a large matter – it can be the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning strike.”

Who can re-lease information?

According to AFI 35-101, every Air Force member or employee is responsible for obtaining the necessary review and clearance before releasing any statement, text or imagery to the public – to include digital products being loaded on an unrestricted Web site.

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NCO learns true meaning of Memorial Day from life experiences, Khobar Towers bombing

By Tech Sgt.
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The meaning of Memorial Day has changed for me as my experiences in life have changed me. I was raised in Tampa, Florida. One Memorial Day, when I was 8 years old, my dad took me fishing. We stopped at the store for ice. There, sitting outside the store was an old gentleman wearing a military flight cap and a red vest covered with patches and pins. My dad bought a little plastic red, white, and blue flower from the man. It was the way my dad said “thank you” for that little flower that left an indelible impression in my mind. It was as though that man had just sold my dad the most valuable thing on

Earth. He was so serious – so respectful. I remember thinking “but it was only a little plastic flower.” Later, my dad explained. He told me that he had thanked the man for being a war veteran and that the flower was a reminder, on this day at least, to thank and respect all who have served in wars for America. It was a quiet and peaceful day on the water fishing with my dad. That was the first Memorial Day I was aware that the day was reserved for a specific purpose...to give solemn thanks and respect to those who fought for our country. At 17, I spent Memorial Day with my friends in Key West, Florida. We sailed all morning; dove for conch and lobster along the coral heads all

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day; and then built a bonfire on the beach of a little island and roasted our catch. At that time, current events in the world were full of promise for the future. Hostages had been freed; Germany unified; and Americans were involved in civil rights movements all over the world. The purpose of the day became less solemn and more celebratory. I gave thanks, but I also celebrated that I lived in the

greatest nation on Earth.

At 34, I was deployed to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. I was assigned as the Law Office Manager of the 4404th Wing (Provisional), Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, located in Khobar Towers. I spent that Memorial Day at “The Oasis,” which consisted of a huge “L” shaped swimming pool, barbe-cue pit and driving range. It was 118 degrees that day and the pool was packed. Songs with lyrics about freedom and America blared over the loud speakers.

By that time I had learned a little bit about the culture of the country I was living in. I had been stationed at Zaragoza AB, Spain and Incirlik AB, Turkey, and had seen how those cultures were very different from ours.

The differences in Saudi Arabia far exceeded anything I had experienced before. That Memorial Day I felt deep gratitude for being born an American and for the opportunity to contribute, however minutely, to preserving my country’s way of life.

On June 26, 1996, I played volleyball with my squadron and then went to the rec center. Around 10 p.m. the lights in the building flickered, there was a deep boom, and then glass and concrete were blown in on us.

Furniture, along with people, was thrown across the room. When I got out of the building I saw a huge gray-orange mushroom-shaped cloud in the sky. I smelled sulfur in the air. I ran over to one of the two buildings closest to the blast. The door was blocked with debris. I could hear people screaming inside. I helped to clear an opening so people could get out. We then started searching inside for those who might be trapped.

When we got to the fourth floor we found a young man ly-

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ing in blood. He was wearing only shorts. He had a deep gash on the left side of his lower chest, someone covered with the palm of their hand. The room next to us was on fire. We found a door blown off of its hinges and used it as a gurney and carried the injured man down the four flights of stairs. When we got outside we laid him on top of a wooden picnic table. I stayed with him, and took over applying pressure to his injury. I covered it as tight as I could to keep the blood inside with my right hand. I held his left hand with my left hand. He was in shock. I told him to hang on. He said “Oh God...Oh, God.” He was so brave. He died within a few minutes just as medical personnel started arriving. I watched them carry his body away and put it on a blue military bus.

When I turned back another bleeding man had been placed on the picnic table. He had a deep cut along the right side of his face and eye. He also had two deep cuts above his waist. Medical personnel were handing out first-aid kits and we were able to bandage his wounds fairly quickly.

He was placed on a different bus.

The Chief of Security Police

told us to pass the word that everyone should gather at the Desert Rose, which was our dining facility, and try to find our unit. At the Desert Rose, there were hundreds of injured men and women. The dining facility was transformed into a make shift hospital. Those of us who were not injured worked through the night sweeping glass, clearing debris, and making sleeping areas for those whose quarters were destroyed. The next morning I learned that 19 American airmen were killed. More than 400 others were injured. I later learned that five of the airmen who died were from my home base – Patrick AFB, Fla.

This year will be the fourth Memorial Day since the bombing of Khobar Towers. Not a day has passed that I haven’t thought about that one young man and the other 18 men who died that night. And that is how it should be. They paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country – for our country.

This is what I believe Memorial Day means – recognizing the sacrifices others have made for our country. It is a day to thank them; respect them; appreciate them; celebrate them; be grateful for them; but above all else – remember them.

(Courtesy AFNS, and The Air Force Judge Advocate General)



Photo by 1st Lt. Angela O’Connell

Neat stuff!

David L. Hirtreiter, Jr., 5, inspects a hanbok from Korea during the Asian/Pacific-American Heritage Committee annual observance at the Fiesta Center Tuesday.